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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TOKYO 004926

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SECDEF FOR OSD/APSA SHINN/HILL/BASALLA; USFJ FOR
J00/J01/J3/J4/J5

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/19/2017

TAGS: PREL PGOV MARR JA

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR AND DEFENSE MINISTER ON OEF, ALLIANCE
MANAGEMENT

Classified By: Ambassador J. Thomas Schieffer, Reasons: 1.4 (b/d)

¶11. (C) Summary: Defense Minister Shigeru Ishiba emphasized that his top priority is to increase public support for extending the Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) refueling operation in the Indian Ocean during a meeting with the Ambassador on October 18. Ishiba said that extending the MSDF mission is an important step towards passing a Permanent SDF Dispatch Law that would give Tokyo more flexibility in operating abroad. The Ambassador encouraged Ishiba to focus on the strategic reasons Japan is participating in OEF operations and resist media and opposition efforts to change the terms of debate. On Host Nation Support (HNS), Ishiba noted the tough U.S. stance, and suggested approaching upcoming discussions with the goal of enhancing the bilateral alliance. Ishiba also urged the two sides to focus more time on discussing alliance capabilities rather than issues related to "local burden reduction." End Summary.

OEF

¶12. (C) During an October 18 breakfast meeting, Defense Minister Shigeru Ishiba and the Ambassador reviewed the political landscape surrounding the extension of the Anti-Terror Special Measures Law governing the MSDF operation in support of OEF. Ishiba commented that the Japanese public still does not grasp the implication of the post-9/11 environment. Many opposition members of the Diet, he continued, are under the mistaken belief that if Japan opted out of the global war on terror, it would be safe from attack. The Ambassador noted that the same phenomenon existed in Australia before the Bali bombings.

¶13. (C) Regarding the ongoing Diet debate on the OEF mission,

Ishiba thanked the U.S. government for providing data on past USN OEF operations, but urged the U.S. to give Japan more detailed information to refute opposition charges. The Ambassador expressed disappointment over opposition tactics in the OEF debate. The constant demands for proof that the U.S. did not divert Japanese fuel for non-OEF missions suggests that the U.S. credibility as an ally is being called into question. This is why, he added, we are preparing a general statement that will make clear that we are not hiding anything. The Ambassador urged Ishiba to focus public attention on the strategic reasons Japan is taking part in OEF.

¶4. (C) Ishiba said that he is regularly highlighting the broader issues involved in the debate, including the importance of keeping Islamic Pakistan involved in OEF and reacting to the murder of 24 Japanese on September 11. Ishiba expressed disappointment that the previous government did not extend the Anti-Terror Law or pass a General SDF Dispatch Law before the July 29 election debacle. Ishiba commented that the Prime Minister shares his goal of advancing a General SDF Dispatch Law after managing the OEF issue. Such a law, he added, would make it easier for Japan to make appropriate international military contributions without requiring a constitutional reinterpretation.

Alliance Management

¶5. (C) Ishiba expressed disappointment over the focus of bilateral security dialogues. Alliance Transformation, he continued, involves both burden reduction for local communities and steps to maintain the Alliance's deterrent

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capabilities. Too much focus has been on the former rather than the latter, Ishiba concluded. Implementing our base realignment measures is Japan's responsibility, Ishiba asserted, and Tokyo would complete its work, especially in Okinawa. At the same time, he urged that the U.S. and Japan accelerate discussions at the political, official, and military levels on applying lessons from the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) to expand the SDF's capabilities within the Alliance framework.

¶6. (C) Ishiba said he hoped that discussions on HNS could be conducted in the same spirit. Both sides should approach the review of the Special Measures Agreement (SMA) with the goal of making the Alliance stronger. The Ambassador responded that it is time to get serious about negotiating an agreement. He expressed concern that there are misunderstandings on both sides about the issue that have delayed progress.

SCHIEFFER